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BROTHER JACKSON'S  
O R A T I O N.

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ST. PETER'S LODGE, JUNE 25, 5798.

*VOTED, unanimously, that the Right Worshipful JONATHAN GAGE, DUDLEY A. TYNG, P. M. and JOSHUA GREENLEAF, P. M. be a Committee to present the thanks of this Lodge to our Worshipful Brother JACKSON for the Oration delivered this day, and to request of him a copy for the Prejs.*

ABRAHAM PERKINS, Secretary.



A N  
O R A T I O N,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

*RIGHT WORSHIPFUL MASTER AND BRETHREN OF*

ST. PETER'S LODGE,

AT THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS,

ON THE FESTIVAL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST;

CELEBRATED JUNE 25, 5798.

BY THE WORSHIPFUL BROTHER CHARLES JACKSON, P. M.

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NEWBURYPORT;

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## MASONIC ORATION.

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GOD MADE MAN PERFECT, BUT HE HATH SOUGHT OUT MANY  
INVENTIONS.

ONE of the first of these *inventions*, and that which was the parent of every other, arose from the all-powerful influence of the social affections. Man could not endure to live alone ; and was induced rather to follow his *companion* into untried wilds and deserts, than to dwell with solitude in Eden. The commanding energy and uniform impulse of these affections, as they were the cause of man's first apostacy and unhappiness ; so have they from that period by a kind of retributive justice constituted his principal felicity, and afforded his best resource in the various evils arising in *the rugged paths of life*. In every eulogy on our

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temporal resources we speak with a respectful exception of that purest of religions, and of those inestimable blessings which are the gift of revelation. To these alone we must owe the happiness of the closet, and the bright prospects of future bliss. But a *solitary* zeal soon ceases to warm us, and the brightest prospects are often obscured in our uncertain and imperfect view. These alone can never fill the restless and impatient heart ; and every emotion of the bosom, every listless vacancy of sentiment, speaks aloud that " it is not good for man to be alone."

To this principle, added to the continual wants and weaknesses of human nature, we owe the first institution of civil society, and all those good offices we every day unwittingly bestow on each other—which arise out of our situation—which are given without an effort, and received without any acknowledgement, like the ordinary blessings of nature and providence. To the same causes we owe likewise the more

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active and pointed exercises of benevolence, and those numberless deeds of charity which bind man to man—which are more blessed to him that giveth, than to him that receiveth—which “like richest alchymy” will change and soften the most obdurate heart, and from unconcerned spectators, and citizens of the world, convert us into friends and brothers.

BUT a late author of celebrated memory and ambiguous character, has observed that “the stock of charity in the world is by no means sufficient for the many great claims which are hourly made upon it ;” and however we may disapprove the *application*, we cannot justly deny the *truth*, of his observation. Our stock of charity is insufficient—and shall we then strive to increase the number of claimants ? shall we *invent* ceremonies and institutions, which bind us by forced and artificial ties, and by enlarging the sphere of our duties render their obligation weaker, and their performance more difficult ? This is the first objection that is usually made to  
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the venerable institution whose festival we this day celebrate. We are gravely told, that in the various ordinary relations of civil and social life we have objects more than sufficient for the fullest exercise of brotherly love : and we are advised to practice more strictly our acknowledged and common duties, before we voluntarily subject ourselves to new and stronger obligations.

LET us allow for a moment a weight in this objection, and we shall find that it proves too much, and destroys itself. On this principle, if strictly pursued, each man must insult himself, and forego every pleasure of social life, lest he might not perform all its duties. If men were already perfect—if their minds were fully enlightened, and their passions under subjection—they would never have “*sought out the many inventions*” which our text seems to reprobate. But if we consider man as he is—fallen from that state of perfection in which we are told he was created—if we view him overwhelmed with



with the natural evils of life, and increasing them ten fold by the violence of his own passions—we shall find abundant cause to bless all those “*inventions*,” which can calm the wild tumults of his soul, and furnish him with “arms against this host of troubles.”

SUCH are the objects, and such we trust have been the effects, of the society of Free Masons. We are never engaged in the wild attempt to carry the virtues, or the pleasures, of life above the lot of humanity. We cannot as masons eradicate those passions which are born with us ; nor ought we by our voluntary engagements in any measure to weaken the earlier obligations of nature and society. Far from lessening “the stock of charity in the world,” one design of our institution is to increase and perpetuate the fund. It is indeed impossible to furnish any new objects for the exercise of this virtue—for we are taught without entering the lodge “to do good unto *all men*”—but we endeavour in every mode that can

impress the imagination or touch the feelings, to enforce its performance.

THE use of symbols and emblems has been adopted in every age, and almost every nation, of the earth. The narrow compass of the human mind can never satisfactorily contemplate an abstract quality, nor will the soul be warmed by the most glowing description of "the beauty of virtue." On this principle we have established that striking system of allegory, and those impressive ceremonies, which bring the imagination in aid of the understanding; and inscribe, as with the point of a diamond, the most solemn truths and the most sacred duties on the heart of every worthy Mason.

THE candidate for initiation into our mysteries, is never required to abjure the feelings of a man, nor the duties of a citizen. We instruct him to leave behind at the door of the Lodge, every thing *offensive* to the purest brotherly love and the most unlimited confidence; we teach him to "lay aside pride.

malice

malice and all uncharitableness"—to *divest* himself of every thing foreign to "a good man and true"—and when thus *prepared*, we bid him *enter*, in singleness of heart, and clothe him anew with the garment of innocence and the spirit of peace and good will to all men.

BUT we are exultingly asked, what must be the *social affections* of those men who can be contented with such gloomy seclusion from the most refined pleasures of life? What must be that *charity* which forbids to the fairest part of creation to partake and communicate its blessings?—Numberless answers have been made to this insinuation; and the very zeal with which Masons have always endeavoured to repel it, sufficiently evinces their respect for the other sex, and is perhaps the best refutation of the charge. But without repeating the many cogent reasons which have so often been assigned—without suggesting the utter inutility of such a measure—that those whose souls are naturally attuned to the mild and  
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softer virtues should receive any further inducements to peace, love, and good will towards men—we may boldly declare that they are utterly unqualified for the duties of our society—that their admission would even prove injurious and destructive to its first principles. It will be remembered that we always meet on the *level* ; that the basis of our institution is the most perfect equality, and one of its objects the control and subjection of our passions. And shall we then introduce into the asylum of peace and tranquility the only object which could merit and justify contention ? Shall we vainly attempt to *meet on the level* with those whom we acknowledge the arbiters of human happiness, and the sublimary givers of every good gift ? Would each fair candidate consider herself as an *individual* member of an *equal* society, and neither feel, nor excite, an emotion more partial, more confined ? We may justly fear that if they could receive such homage, Masons could never pay it. The very *similarity* of  
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our tastes and passions, instead of *assimilating* our hearts and promoting harmony and peace, would in this instance prove a fruitful source of enmity and discord. Jealousy and envy would inevitably banish the kind offices of charity and the confidence of friendship—and among successful candidates and zealous rivals we could no longer recognize the features of a brother.

AGAIN it may be enquired what new system in morality have we invented? What new virtues can we inculcate? Must the world become Masons to learn the practice of charity and benevolence? And can we place these duties in a stronger point of light, or impress their obligation more forcibly on the mind, than is already done in those sacred books which are the rule of our faith and conduct? We are taught that our society in its origin was as useful and as much distinguished for its *doctrines*, as for its *practice*, of virtue and morality. Since that period the light of revelation has superceded the

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necessity of all human institutions ; and our path is now so plainly indicated that " he who runs may read." We do not therefore arrogate any exclusive credit from the purity of our principles or the sublimity of our doctrines—they are now sanctioned by Divine Authority, and ought to be common to all men. But we endeavour constantly to enforce them by all the influence of example and all the weight of habit—and this, under the authority of an institution, venerable from it's antiquity, respectable from the professions and conduct of its members, and honorable from the exalted characters in all ages who have been its friends and patrons.

It is somewhat degrading to the pride of virtue to consider how many of our best actions are the fruits of imitation, and the children of habit. But though the casuist may not so highly esteem the moral excellence of these actions, the philanthropist will find them productive of as many benefits to society as if they were derived from a purer source. It

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will not then be objected to our institution that we have encouraged this principle, and endeavoured to improve it to the advantage of ourselves and of mankind. And we may affirm with confidence that a zealous and habitual attendance on the duties of the Lodge cannot fail to eradicate many evil propensities in the heart of a worthy brother—that it will inevitably ameliorate his manners and habits, and eventually make him a better man, and a more useful member of society. Is he of an ardent and impetuous temper? Our very form of address will necessarily control any sudden intemperance of passion, and teach him the virtue of mutual forbearance. Is he “puffed up with the pride of life?” We here bring him *on a level* with every good Mason throughout the globe. Is he bigotted to any particular system of morality or religion? We teach him to respect honor and honesty in his brethren of every sect and denomination under heaven. Is his soul contracted, illiberal

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and cold ? We introduce him to a fraternity chosen out of all nations of the earth ; and teach him to love “ good men and true”—the growth of every clime.

It were endless to enumerate all the instances in which our society is calculated to elevate the character and improve the morals. It is sufficient to have pointed out the mode in which it is conceived to act with most efficiency, and to produce the greatest actual and visible benefit to the world. This is not then by “ inventing new systems of morality ”——It is not by “ wire-drawn dissertations on the social duties—by amplifying and straining to hyperbole the sentiments of philanthropy and universal beneficence.”\* It is by the silent, but powerful influence of habit and example to correct the evil propensities, to repress the intemperance, and control the ardor of a too sanguine constitution : and on the other hand,

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\* See proofs of a conspiracy, &c. by J. Robinson, Professor of Natural Philosophy, and Secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. 3d edition, Philadelphia, 1798, p. 27.



to give exercise and stability to those sentiments of charity and benevolence which the coldest heart must sometimes feel, and which every good man will always indulge and cherish in his own bosom. In fine we may conclude in the language of one of our ancient records, that though "*some Masons are not so vertuous as some other menne ; Yet yn the moſte parte thay be more gude than thay woulde be yf thay war nott Maſonnes.*"

COULD it have been believed that societies thus constituted, that institutions of which these are the objects, could ever have been chosen as "hot-beds of sedition and impiety ?" Yet this charge is expressly made in a celebrated work\* which has lately made its appearance in this country, and some evidence is adduced of its truth with respect to numerous European lodges. The public character of this author, the ingenuity of his work, and the laudable design by which he was actuated, entitle him to respect and attention. It

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\* Proofs of a conspiracy, &c. by J. Robinson.

were to be wished that we could also applaud his candor. But after his repeated declarations that the infamous schemes which he developes have no connection with the institution, and designs of Free-masonry, what shall we think of his illiberal sarcasms on that fraternity, of which he acknowledges himself a member ? It is extremely to be lamented that he has thus sacrificed the truth of history\* to serve the purposes of politics, and degraded the dignity of philosophy by the spirit of a *penfioner*. If it is an object with the government of his country to abolish the secret meetings of this society, he should have left it to some meaner hand to pave the way to its destruction ; and not have given us occasion to believe that he has adopted one of those maxims which himself most severely

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\* This author attempts throughout his work to ridicule our claim to *antiquity* ; and particularly page 20th, and 22d, he assigns about the middle of the last century as the period when the society first assumed its present form, and established those principles which are now considered as it's distinguishing characteristic. He ought to have known that in the reign of Henry VI, A. D. 1425, an act of the English Parliament was made on this subject, which clearly proves that the fraternity was then very different from a common company of tradesmen. And from a manuscript of that age preserved in the Bodleian Library, it appears that the same claim was then made to the highest antiquity, and that the same principles were advanced as peculiar to the institution. This instance is noticed, as being the first which occurs, and because the evidence respecting it is derived from the most authentic *public* records, and is totally unconnected with the archives or traditions of the fraternity.

verely reprobates—and while impressed with the importance of his object, has trusted that “the end would sanctify the means.”

A CANDID and attentive perusal of his book will most clearly evince the purity and innocence of this society; and abundantly shew that the profligate and abandoned characters whom he describes, instead of finding support and assistance in our institutions, did in every instance sacrifice *them* as the first obstacle in their career of sedition and infidelity. The seeds of corruption were long since sown by the pretended philosophers of France. They levelled their insidious attacks against every principle of religion and morality, and by degrees sapped the foundations of all government and order. At that period the secrecy preserved in the meetings of this society might afford a tempting prospect of security to their nefarious schemes, and the respect attached to the fraternity might preserve them from suspicion. Accordingly we have  
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reason to believe that they sometimes assumed this cloak, and shrouded their infernal plans under pretences of philanthropy and benevolence. As the ardor for novelty, the rage of speculation, and the corruption of morals, increased, they gradually threw off the mask ; and finally discarded all the forms and ceremonies, as they had long before abolished the spirit & the tendency, of this venerable institution. And will it be imputed as a crime to this society, that it has fallen amidst the general wreck of every thing sacred and valuable among men. It were to expect those "*wunderwerkings*" which in ancient times were attributed to it, to believe that it could subsist unfulfilled and unimpaired amidst those disorders which have convulsed and disgraced Europe.—It would indeed have been miraculous if its pure and sacred principles had been respected by that people, who have solemnly sat in judgment on the existence of a God, and deliberately abolished all religion by an edict.

BUT



BUT it is further urged by the author above alluded to, that although our society is pure in itself and innocent of all these corruptions ; yet from the secrecy of its proceedings and the perfect freedom of speech which it indulges, it may become the cloak of conspiracy and the asylum of atheism—that we ought therefore voluntarily to sacrifice it to the peace and security of the state. And is it then believed that by abolishing our meetings we should leave no retreat to the spirit of disorganization and infidelity ? And do we not find in the scenes developed by this author, that the same men could assume a thousand various forms ; and were equally dangerous under many other names as while they abused the sacred title of Free-masons ? The secrecy and the freedom of our meetings may be an object of terror to many governments in Europe—but can never excite nor indulge a greater ardor for liberty, than already warms every *American* bosom. The *levelling system* objected to us may check the intemperance of pride and exalt the spirit of humility, but can never exceed

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that *political equality* which is every day enjoyed among the citizens of this happy country. If still we should be esteemed dangerous to the peace and happiness of society, we may appeal with confidence to the characters who compose our fraternity. When we are suspected of *atheism*, we will point to those numerous and most respectable members of the Clergy whose names are enrolled among us——when again we are charged with *sedition and conspiracy*, we will name our *illustrious brother, WASHINGTON.*

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL AND BELOVED BRETHREN,

WHILE we congratulate ourselves on the return of this joyful anniversary, we cannot but notice among the events of the past year an attack on our institution, as singular, as it ~~is~~ serious and important. We have at all times been exposed to the vain shafts of satire, and the affected smile of contempt. And when our institutions were ridiculed as insignificant and our objects considered futile, we could silently pity the perverseness

verseness of ignorance and prejudice—we recollected that “he  
 that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and  
 shame unto him”—and we retired with renewed taste and sa-  
 tisfaction to the sacred duties and pleasures of the lodge. But  
 when we contemplate the scene which is now opened before  
 us—when we behold the moral world overwhelmed with a  
 deluge of vice, infidelity and every species of disorder and cor-  
 ruption—when it is seriously asserted and believed that our  
 societies are the source of all these disorders, that through us  
 they will find their way into our happy country, and that we  
 shall eventually destroy the established constitutions of govern-  
 ment and the most sacred principles of religion—under char-  
 ges like these, silence might be construed into guilt, and inac-  
 tion would be criminal. Impressed with these sentiments,  
 the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Massachusetts have pre-  
 sented a respectful address to the Supreme Executive of the  
 United States, expressing their just abhorrence of the princi-  
 ples and views attributed to them, and their solemn resolu-  
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alion in every possible event to act the part of worthy citizens  
 and ardent lovers of their country. While we consider this  
 excellent address as expressing the sentiments of every worthy  
 Mason, let us my brethren in presence of the Supreme Architect  
 of the Universe solemnly pledge ourselves to maintain the same  
 patriotic resolution. We shall never forget that solemn charge  
 so often repeated both in public and in private—"to suffer no  
 question of *religion or politics* to be debated in the lodge"—  
 but the exclusion of these subjects will never render us luke-  
 warm in our attachment to their first principles. We shall  
 never consider the existence or the perfections of Deity as a  
 subject of *doubt*—nor will it ever be a *question*, whether we  
 shall support and defend the government which protects us  
 and the land which gave us birth. While thus true to our  
 country and our God, we shall most effectually evince the  
 purity of our sacred institutions ; and prepare ourselves for  
 admission into that *Grand Temple* above where clouds and  
 darkness shall no more veil the majesty of our *Supreme Grand*  
*Master*; but *light and love and peace* shall crown our hopes.



